Synthesis Report for the Celtic Sociolinguistics Symposium in Association with COST Action IS1306: New Speakers in the Celtic Speaking World

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1. Framework for the event: Key questions

Modern sociolinguistic research on the Celtic languages is characterised by a diverse constellation of research agendas that complement earlier pioneering dialectological studies. These modern approaches diversify the field of Celtic sociolinguistics and enhance our understanding of the current dynamics of the Celtic languages in their social environments by examining the nexus between the individual, the linguistic, the social, and the cultural. Such research plays a vital role in elucidating the nature of both language and society in late modernity where social arrangements and linguistic practices are increasingly fluid and changeable. Due to the current status of all of the Celtic languages, the future vitality of Irish, Scottish Gaelic, Manx, Welsh, Cornish and Breton depends largely on the presence of new speakers and on their relationships with other speakers. The sociolinguistics of the Celtic languages is therefore, by necessity, largely a sociolinguistics of new speakerness. Amongst the key questions addressed at the Symposium were:

- What conditions lead to the maintenance, revitalisation and revival of the Celtic languages?
- What is the relationship of new speakers of the Celtic languages with speakers from more traditional backgrounds?
- What are the linguistic features that characterise the speech of contemporary speakers of the Celtic languages? From native speakers to new speakers.
- How are contemporary speech practices of native and new speakers evaluated?
- What is the contribution (if any) of education to the maintenance, revitalisation and revival the Celtic languages?
- To what extent are the Celtic languages a microcosm for minority languages more broadly?

2. Definitions of new speakers adopted

In keeping with the range of definitions of the new speaker previously operationalized within the network (e.g. O'Rourke et al. 2015) a diversity of interpretations of new speakers was evident at the Celtic Sociolinguistics Symposium. These definitions varied along a continuum from emergent speakers (cf García and Kleifgen 2010) with limited linguistic repertoires through to expert language users (cf Piller (2001); Rampton (1990)) with 'native-like' language proficiency. The particular approach adopted by different researchers at the event was in all cases context dependent, with robust justifications as to why the label should be expanded or limited. This raises the familiar question of what exactly we refer to when we use the potentially nebulous label new speaker.

3. Profiles / contexts explored and cross-cutting themes or differences across these contexts

As the event focused on the Celtic languages, contributions were based on the areas where users of the Celtic languages are most abundant. Research was presented on most of the Celtic languages (Irish, Scottish Gaelic, Manx, Welsh, and Breton) as encountered in Ireland, the UK, France and Canada while an underlying theme, if not an explicit focus, in many of the papers was the contact situations in which these languages exist (contact with English in Ireland, the UK and Canada, and with French in France). The conference featured participants mainly from Ireland and the UK, however, Poland, France, the USA and Canada were also represented among the contributors. The overarching themes of the conference include: Language Acquisition / Learning; Language and Identity; Language Attitudes and Ideologies; Language in Education; Language in the Media; (Family) Language Policy; Language Standardisation; Linguistic Variation and Change; and Social Meaning in Linguistic Variation.

4. Emerging from the event

A special Celtic languages issue of *Language, Culture and Curriculum* is in the advanced stages of preparation based on research presented at the conference. This volume is edited by Noel Ó Murchadha and Bettina Migge and features contributions from the Symposium's plenary speakers: John Edwards; Michael Hornsby; Máiréad Moriarty; Fiona O'Hanlon; Tadhg Ó hIfearnáin; Cassie Smith-Christmas. Within this special issue, many of the overarching themes of the conference are investigated.

Following the success of the first Celtic Sociolinguistics Symposium in University College Dublin, a follow up event is being planned for October 2016 in Trinity College Dublin, The University of Dublin. By establishing this Symposium as a biennial event it is hope that sociolinguists across the Celtic languages will have a forum to explore issues pertaining to the new speaker phenomenon in the Celtic-speaking world into the future.

5. Issues raised and account of contributions

As described in Profiles and Contexts above, a wide spectrum of themes were explored at the event. In total, the event comprised 14 paper presentations in addition to 6 invited plenary lectures. A brief account of the research presented is provided below, however, the abstracts can also be found in full at the following link.

http://celticsociolinguistics.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Achoimr%C3%ADArFad.pdf

John Edwards - St Francis Xavier University, Antigonish: The Celtic languages in current sociolinguistic perspective

Máiréad Moriarty - University of Limerick: Globalizing Gaeilge: Orders of Irish language LPP'

Michael Hornsby - Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań: To what extent is postvernacularity a useful (socio)linguistic concept for minority languages such as Breton?

Fiona O'Hanlon - University of Edinburgh: Gaelic-medium education in Scotland: current contexts and future directions in language policy, practice and research

Smith-Christmas - University of the Highlands and Islands and University of Edinburgh: Doing Motherese in a Minority Language: Attempting to resist the realities of bilingualism

Tadhg Ó hIfearnáin - University of Limerick: Sociolinguistic vitality after language shift and without intergenerational transmission

Ingeborg Birnie (University of Aberdeen): Gaelic in the public domain – Management, Usage and Ideologies

Maggie Bonsey (National University of Ireland, Galway): Experimental Irish Language Theatre: A New Beginning?

Torsten Dörflinger (Johannes-Gutenberg University, Mainz): Language Use and Attitudes towards Irish among Gaeltacht School Children in Co. Donegal: Evidence from a survey

Stuart Dunmore (University of Edinburgh): Bilingual life after school? The language practices and social profiles of Gaelic-medium educated adults

Christopher Lewin (Aberystwyth University): Comparisons between corpus planning for Scottish Gaelic and Manx: a response to the Dlùth is Inneach project

Wilson McLeod (University of Edinburgh) and Bernadette O'Rourke (Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh): Irish parents and Gaelic-medium education in Scotland

Siobhan Nic Fhlannchadha & Tina Hickey (University College Dublin): What multiple perspectives on accuracy in speaking an endangered minority language reveal about language ownership and authority

Karen Ní Chlochasaigh (University of Limerick): Effective Second Language Acquisition among learners of the Irish Language: Bua nó Dua?

Laoise Ní Dhúda (National University of Ireland, Galway): Language Management and Language Managers: Who are the Irish language managers in an Breacbhaile?

Brian Ó Curnáin (Dublin Institute of Advanced Studies) and Conchúr Ó Giollagáin (University of the Highlands and Islands): New Speakers of New Irish and globalised English through the deterritorialised autochthony of modernity at large

Conchúr Ó Giollagáin (University of the Highlands and Islands): Post-language planning: A new deal for Gaelic identity in Ireland

Kevin Petit (Université Lumière Lyon 2): Language, Identity, and Motivation: the Irish Summer College

Hugh Rowland (National University of Ireland, Galway): 'The curse of Babel': language debates in Ireland of the 1960s

Hannah Simms (SOAS, University of London): The shifting attitudes towards Irish as a language of shared heritage in Northern Ireland

6. Policy Recommendations

Although the Symposium did not explicitly concern itself with making policy recommendations, it provided an opportunity for knowledge exchange not only between scholars, but between academics and the broader public. The event was open to the general public and was attended by interested parties including policy-makers and other stakeholders, especially from the Irish-language

context. While the event did not specifically aim to influence policy, the participation of policy makers in the event brings the new speaker concept into focus as part of the broader language policy agenda in Ireland.

References

García, O. & Kleifgen, J.A. (2010) *Educating emergent bilinguals: Policies, programs and practices for English language learners.* New York: Teachers College Press.

O'Rourke, B., Pujolar, J. & Ramallo, F. (2015) 'New speakers of minority languages: The challenging opportunity', *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*. Issue 231: 1–20.

Piller, I. (2001) 'Who, if anyone, is a native speaker? Anglistik: Mitteilungen des Verbandes Deutscher Anglisten 12 (2), 109-121.

Rampton, B. (1990) 'Displacing the 'native speaker': expertise, affiliation, and inheritance', *ELT Journal.* 44/2 (1990): 97-101.